



Guidelines for maintenance of the territory

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Risk analysis, maps, and strategies. European cooperation in dealing with emergencies by protecting the environment, territories, landscapes. Constant exchange of best practices and skills, training, precious investments in technologies and safety. There is all this in the anti-forest fire drill (AIB) which took place on May 31, 2021, at the dog training camp of the National Fire Brigade, located in the municipality of Ugento, in the province of Lecce. The exercise, carried out jointly and with a common methodology between the project partners (Ministry of the Interior, Emergency Situation Directorate - Montenegro, Lezha Region - Albania, NGO PFD - Albania), is part of the trilateral project "3 Watch Out" (Ways, Tools and Challenges for Our Safety), co-financed under the "Interreg IPA CBC Italy Albania Montenegro 2014-2020" Program and in the more general context of the European strategy for cross-border cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region.

It was a significant moment of simulation in the activation of the AIB module provided by the European Civil Protection Mechanism which coordinates the actions of prevention and management of hydrogeological, seismic and forest fire risks in the EU area.

For the Apulian Civil Protection, the Ugento exercise represents at the same time a dress rehearsal for the start of the anti-fire campaign that traditionally starts in our country from mid-June continuing until September, but above all the concrete opportunity to verify by putting the know-how acquired over years of experience in the field in fighting forest fires is available to other countries. One of the activities on which the history of the Apulian regional civil protection is based.

A joint effort to prevent risks, to prepare for the management of natural or man-made disasters, in the use of expert groups of volunteers trained to react in a timely manner to emergencies, which allows to protect the environment, the safety of citizens and to bring immediate assistance to populations affected by disastrous events. This effective model of prevention and safety on the fire front has involved the Puglia Region, the Regional Civil Protection and the National Department of Civil Protection, the Fire Brigade, the Regional Agency for irrigation and forestry activities (ARIF) for years, local authorities and administrations, together with the vast world of volunteering and the various associative components of civil protection.

The exercise - explained Francesco Ronco, regional civil protection officer and project manager - represented an opportunity for training both for the Civil Protection system, in particular for the Volunteers of the European Module of Civil Protection for the active fight against forest fires according to the principles of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and for both Albanian and Montenegrin colleagues who, with their Civil Protection systems, will have to integrate to ensure that any rescue operations can be coordinated in the Mediterranean area".

During the exercise, a large fire was simulated, in an area of 1,200 hectares where there were some houses, a tourist facility and a farm. «In Puglia - underlines Antonio Mario Lerario, manager of the Civil Protection section of the Puglia Region - every year about 5 thousand outbreaks of fires develop, almost all of which are not natural combustion. In this scenario, the training of operators takes on particular importance and what we have carried out in the field in these last hours in Ugento is a tactical coordination activity aimed at the most effective definition of teamwork, because only by placing all the components of the system together, Fire Protection is effective and somehow manages to achieve the result of safeguarding our territory ».

The command of the Lecce Fire Brigade played a decisive role in the success of the exercise. «In case of fires - underlines the commander Antonio Panaro - we represent the first point of reference for the

population and these exercises are useful for establishing and improving relations with other subjects, including international ones, who carry out fire-fighting activities. Unfortunately, Salento is the victim of the plague of fires. We receive about 70 requests for intervention per day. These are fires that almost always find their fuse in the weeds present along the roads and that can sometimes be uncontrollable. The appeal I make to everyone is to be more attentive and collaborative by calling 115".

Another important player in this exercise was the Municipality of Ugento which activated a Municipal Civil Protection Operations Center, in close contact with the Rescue Coordination Center of the Prefecture of Lecce and with the regional Operations Room. "It was an innovative experience with attention to the smallest details, a training test - says Mayor Massimo Lecci - which helped us to understand the many organizational and logistical aspects to be taken into consideration in the event of fires, which unfortunately are not lacking in our territory. The main goal remains prevention. We must grow the culture of territorial protection and safeguarding. Continuing to set fire to the territory means jeopardizing a future that is not easy to foresee ».

Thanks to a strongly shared and participated model, Puglia is proposed as one of the pivots in the activation strategy of the anti-fire module envisaged by the European Civil Protection Mechanism. The main objective of the exercise that took place in Ugento was to test the Ground Forest Fire Fighting using Vehicles (GFFFV) capability of the AIB module, i.e. the fight against forest fires with ground vehicles and methods. Once fully operational, Puglia will have at its disposal and will be able to share with other countries the use of multipurpose emergency vehicles in the "Unimog" class (Universal-Motor-Gerat), which are essential for their resistance and ability to move on rough terrain during operations to combat forest fires and in rescue carried out in extreme weather conditions.

A mobilization that, ultimately, confirms the role of leader of Puglia in providing knowledge, professionalism and technologies in Europe and outside Europe, in the fight against forest fires.

It should be noted that all activities were carried out in compliance with the measures provided for in the guidelines and safety protocols for the contrast and containment of the spread of the viral agent SARS-CoV-2.

Albania and Montenegro were Italy's partner countries in the joint fire-fighting exercise coordinated by the Puglia Civil Protection which took place in Ugento on 31 May last. Carried out as part of the "3 Watch Out" project, within the INTERREG IPA CBC Program funded by the EU, the exercise was a test to verify the rescue actions in cooperation between the project areas, starting from the principles of the Mechanism of the Civil Protection of the European Union. Although the measures for the Coronavirus emergency required the exercise to be carried out in three different countries, the simulation was still coordinated by a single direction, constituting an important test for cross-border cooperation in this context.

"It was an excellent experience for our Civil Emergency Unit," explains Tom Preku, Albanian head of 3 Watch Out. "The exercise allowed us to test the training of our rescue teams, response times, organizational and safety procedures, communication systems, means and equipment ». In Albania the simulation took place in a wooded area in the municipality of Vau i Dejës where a technical school is located. "Once the alarm went off, two fire-fighting teams were mobilized with the means of the Fire Brigade, together with the Volunteers of the Malteser Association who provided ambulances and first aid personnel." A structured team that intervened to fight the fire, evacuate the residents and provide relief, under the watchful eye of Mayor Mark Babani and the local population.

The same satisfactory judgment on the outcome of the exercise was given by the manager of 3 Watch Out for Montenegro, Milan Radovic, underlining the timeliness with which the simulation was carried out: "We already had experience in the management of projects related to the prevention of flood risk , but on May 31 for the first time we tested the fire-fighting module of the European Civil Protection Mechanism. 2 operating rooms were activated, we mobilized our National Emergency Directorate, the Danilovgrad Fire Brigade, the rescue teams. I think it is a very realistic test because it allowed us to verify the decision-making procedures at various levels, governmental, local authorities and security, as happened with the involvement of the customs police. A realistic and essential exercise to complete the certification process that we have already started with the European Union ".

In Montenegro, the exercise took place in Lurniza. The simulation provided that the local Fire Brigade barracks were not able, by itself, to fight the fire. Thus, through the emergency number 112, the coordination team of the National Emergency Department was activated, and therefore the Fire Brigade of the nearby cities. Land and air vehicles were used, with helicopters to evacuate people on the spot. The exercise involved a team of 65 operators, including fire-fighting teams, medical teams and the Red Cross.

In Puglia - underlines Antonio Mario Lerario, manager of the Civil Protection section of the Puglia Region - every year about 5 thousand outbreaks of fires develop, almost all of which are not natural combustion. In this scenario, operator training assumes particular importance and what we have carried out in Ugento is a tactical coordination activity aimed at the most effective definition of team work, because only by placing all the components of the system together, the Fire Protection is effective. and somehow manages to achieve the result of safeguarding our territory.

The exercise - explained Francesco Ronco, regional Civil Protection official and project manager - represented an opportunity for training both for the Civil Protection system, and in particular for the operators of the European Civil Protection Module being established for the fight active in forest fires according to the principles of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and for both Albanian and Montenegrin colleagues, with whom we shared methodology and approaches to coordinating the emergency in the field of Civil Protection, in order to accelerate the integration process to ensure that rescue operations can be coordinated effectively in the Mediterranean area. "

After the realisation of the exercise, all the stakeholders and representatives of the operational structures of the national and regional system of Civil Protection discussed about the strengthens and awakens points of the exercise. The main stakeholders are: Regional Civil Protection, UTG Lecce Prefecture, National Civil Protection Department, Carabinieri forestali, ARIF, CNVVF - Lecce Provincial Command, Municipalities of Lecce and Ugento, together with the Coordination of the voluntary service of CP of Lecce and with the President of the Permanent Committee of Regional Civil Protection.

The topics of the discussion are the following:

- Coordination centers ("cor-ccs-com-coc"),
- Welcome areas,
- Training activities,
- Operational activities.

The most important needs identified were the professional training of the staff working in the operating system of Civil Protection and the prevention measures to face the existing issues of the territory.

Moreover, the National Civil Protection Department also confirmed the policy of focusing on training as a central aspect of the prevention and protection of the territory in the context of forest fire fighting.

Finally, building on this experience, the identified needs have been considered as key guidelines for developing both the Regional Civil Protection Programme, and the next possible activities to be organized and undertaken together with other partners in the Adriatic basin

Please see the videos:

<https://youtu.be/k672OwWX1Fw>

<https://youtu.be/hL4F1VSKNVI>

<https://youtu.be/hkvJ37qhQ2s>

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